1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

501 Canoes of this type are propelled by rowing with short oars, except in shallow water where they are poled. This method of propulsion (rowing as opposed to paddling) was adopted in imitation of the boats with which they have become familiar since the European occupation.

For the small canoe of the Great Andaman five or six species of soft-wooded trees are used, of which three are species of *Sterculia*. A suitable tree is selected near the shore or a creek, and is felled. Care is taken to make it fall in a particular direction. Thus, if the trunk is curved, the convex side of the curve will have to be the bottom of the canoe, and the tree should fall so that this side lies on the ground. Trees are very rarely regular and before beginning the work of cutting the natives have to decide how it should be cut so as to give the best result, i.e., the greatest stability.

396 501 After the tree is felled the trunk is cut to the requisite length. The inside of the canoe is first roughly hollowed out with the adze, no use being made of fire. The bark is then removed from the outside of the trunk and the two ends are shaped. Finally, the inside is carefully finished with the adze so as to reduce the sides and bottom to the requisite thickness.

Except at the stem and stern, the canoe retains the shape of the tree, only the bark being removed, and the sides and bottom being formed of the alburnum or sap-wood. At the stern a small platform is cut projecting over the water, which serves as a seat for the steersman. At the prow a larger platform is cut, on which the harpooner stands when he is harpooning turtle or fish. Below these two platforms the ends are not cut away squarely but are rounded from side to side. The prow of the canoe is in every case the lower and therefore broader end of the trunk. It is only in this way that a sufficiently large platform can be provided for the harpooner.

The trees used for canoes have a pithy core and there is therefore a small patch in both the prow and the stern which would admit the water. In former times these two places were caulked with bees'-wax. At the present time the natives often nail a piece of tin (part of an old kerosene tin, for example), with some rags beneath it, on the outside of the canoe at these two places.

237 When the hull of the canoe is finished it is moved to the shore or to the bank of a creek and the outrigger is attached. The float is a straight spar of light wood. In the North Andaman the wood of the *Hibiscus tiliaceus* is often used, but Mr Man says that in the South Andaman the float is always made from a species of *Sterculia* (*mai* in

2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

412 50. *tó·lma l'óko tūg-* and *bī·jma l'óko tūg-*.[1] Quartz and glass flakes and chips used for shaving, scarifying, and tattooing.[2]

51. *ū·ta-*.[3] *Cyrena* shell: great use is made of this, and of other varieties of this class, viz., as knives for cutting thatching leaves, for making the ornamental incisions on bows, paddles, &c., for planing, for sharpening the boar's tusk (item 47), for dressing and preparing arrows, for making the *ūj-* (item 76), for preparing the fibres obtained from the *Melochia velutina* (Andam., *al·aba-*), *Gnetum edule* (Andam., *pī·lita-*), and the *Anodendron paniculatum* (Andam., *yō·lba-*); they are also used as spoons in eating the gravy of pork, turtle, &c., and are in fact so constantly in demand that a supply is always kept and carried about ready for use.

52. *tā·lag-*.[4] Hone or whetstone, which when in use is held in the right hand and applied to the edge of the blade, which is generally held over the inner side of the left foot, the operator being seated on the ground; pointed weapons are sharpened on it in the usual way.

53. *nīp l'àr bū·l-*. Serrated bone at the root of the tail of the sting-ray; in former times their *tó·lbōd-* arrows (items 4 and 7) were headed with these bones, and it is believed that the early reports of the poisoned arrows of the Andamanese are entirely due to this circumstance; for, owing to their fragile spikes, these bones are apt to cause very serious flesh wounds.[5]

54. *gar·en-*. *Dentalium octogonum* used in the manufacture of various personal ornaments.

314 55. *rīm-*. Resin obtained from a large tree (*Celtis* or *Gironniera*) of that name, which is used in making *kâ·ngatâ-būj-* (*vide* item 62).

237 56. *á·ja-pūd-*. Wax of the white honeycomb: it is one of the ingredients in *kâ·ngatâ-būj-* (item 62), and is also used in the manufacture of the *chā·panga-* (item 22).

57. *tō·bud-pūd-* or *lē·re-*. Wax of the black honeycomb, made by a small description of bee in the hollows of trees: it is generally procured by men, and is applied to bowstrings, arrow fastenings, and the *kūd* (item 20) is used for caulking cracks in canoes and buckets.

[NOTE.—The honey is eaten, but is not so much relished as that from the white combs.]

[1] *Vide* Plate VIII, fig. 61.
[2] *Vide* Part III, "Stone Implements," paragraphs 3–6.
[3] *Vide* Plate VIII, fig. 63.
[4] *Vide* Plate VIII, fig. 56.
[5] "These wounds often cause great inflammation, whence a notion has been prevalent from ancient times that the sting is charged with venom, but of this there is no evidence. Other species of the sting-ray are plentiful in the warmer parts of the world, and they are everywhere dreaded. The spine is used by the savages of the South Sea Islands to point their spears" ("Chambers's Cyclop.").

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

attempts to help, after binding his throat, had consisted in smearing the man's entire body with a mixture of ochre, turtle fat and honey with an extra layer on the bitten limb. Although it was very late to start treatment I injected antiserum, and the next day the man seemed a little better. I next saw him eleven days after the injection, when the arm appeared much less swollen, and the pain had almost disappeared, although clear traces of the accident remained; the skin was cracked and peeling, and the two puncture marks at the site of the bite were still gaping open, each revealing red, purulent flesh over a circular area more than two centimetres in diameter. The arm looked almost gangrenous, but its owner did not seem worried, and joined in cheerfully with the others round me. Just over a month after the accident the wound was completely healed, leaving one very grateful patient.

The incident shows the complete solidarity of this simple and reputedly so warlike community; by tacit agreement the patient was relieved of all work, and provided with food by the other families in the communal hut. While he was seriously ill his wife went hunting and fished, normally the man's work. Similar help is given in the case of the aged, or if a wife and mother falls ill; food is provided for them, and for the children, and certain 'sooth-sayers' appear to be at least partially provided with food by the rest of the community on a permanent basis.

For any kind of fever the Onges turn immediately to their stock remedy, smearing the entire body with the usual mixture of ochre, turtle fat and honey. The legs, arms, chest and abdomen are then tightly bound with strips of *Ficus* bark, which are removed and renewed from time to time. Whether the patient has pains in the abdomen or in the chest, or elsewhere, or has a cough, he is invariably stretched out on the ground, and the appropriate part is given a form of vigorous massage by the feet of one of the bystanders. Usually the entire body is pummelled for quite a time, the patient being turned over and over. The patient ends up looking rather like a mummy plastered in ochre and the whole process is to us somewhat amusing, but the Onges all practise it, and submit to it, very seriously, believing implicitly in its efficiency. The mechanism by which the treatment works has yet to be determined!

Balls of ochre the size of a hazelnut and varying in colour from bright red to whitish-yellow are given by mouth, particularly to

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

children. I have seen anything up to half a dozen given, one after another. Their laxative effect is sometimes violent, as the ochre is mixed with the usual turtle fat, plus lumps of pure wax from the hives of the black bees.

Another 'cure' is the smoking of the affected part. One young woman well known to me, Nabinibbi (wife of Maritòi, leader of the Cemalè group), plump and in her own way graceful, had burnt two toes of her right foot, and was unable to sleep with the pain. She smeared the foot well beyond the burn with the usual mixture and held it out to the smoke of great fresh liana seeds laid among embers. The seeds, the size of a large chestnut, but lenticular and covered with a dark brown, leathery skin, burnt with a dense smoke.

Another treatment, rather different, was applied to one of my Onge guides, Toncutèi, who developed a high fever on the night of 28 March 1954, while he was in the communal hut known as Entiguèh, in the north-central area of the island. In fact, it was merely violent indigestion caused by too much pork – Toncutèi, like his father Enagaghe, an indefatigable trencherman, had availed himself too freely of the boars shot that day by my men. His friends laid him on his side on the ground on a rectangular mat barely large enough to take his body, with his legs bent up to his chest. They then lit low fires along two adjoining sides of the mat, turning him from time to time so that he 'cooked' evenly. One Onge began spitting on the patient's hair, and rubbing the spittle into the skin, stopping every now and again to press the victim's head between his hands. Another dissolved ochre in water, and after heating it, rubbed it well into the patient's chest, throat and neck. Meanwhile, a third beat his hands vigorously on Toncutèi's. This went on for just over a quarter of an hour, after which the patient was stretched out on his stomach with his feet sticking out over the end of the mat, ready for the foot massage. As the masseur's foot reached the chest he stopped, pressing hard to enforce complete emptying of the lungs. Half an hour of this led to further rubbing with hands and feet for another fifteen minutes, particularly over the sacrum. Finally Toncutèi was left in peace beside the fire. By dawn the fever was gone (aided possibly by the strong purgative I had administered), although it was a couple of days before he had fully recovered.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

Cleaning themselves, to the Onges, means painting themselves to ward off evil and to remove, so they said, the smell of pig fat after the colossal orgies which follow a particularly good hunt, when even they find the stench too much. These orgies, which give them appalling indigestion for days, are followed by an apparently instinctive variation of their diet to raw or cooked vegetable foods. On three occasions from 1952–54 I was present at one of these solemn pork and honey orgies. The Onges ate almost till they burst, and then, hardly able to move, cleaned up by a grand painting session. The women do the painting, families vying with each other to produce weird new designs, which are then copied until the next feast.[1]

Fed and painted, the Onges sit down to smoke, using pipes made from crabs' claws. Still regardless of hygiene the pipes go from one mouth to another, the women smoking just as heavily as the men.

One curious anomaly is that the Onges do sometimes sweep the earth floor of the communal hut. The floor is not deliberately beaten down, but becomes hardened by continuous walking on it; in dry weather it turns to dust, which rises and settles everywhere, especially under the roof, where the lumps of cooked meat, fish and so on are hung. For the cleaning a broom or besom is prepared, well made with very hard, supple, palm fibres, bound tightly and carefully with cords made from reeds. The whole thing is about eighty centimetres long and as thick as a man's wrist.

The dirt is simply swept out all round from under the roof of the hut through the gap between the roof and the ground. In the course of time a ring of refuse builds up round the hut, forming a glorious breeding ground for insects of all kinds. When the hut has to be rebuilt, owing to the ravages of wood-worm and termites, the ring is levelled off to form the new floor. Since the same small, well-chosen site may be used for thousands of years, the hut ends up perching on top of a small mound of refuse dating back to very

[1] From one year to the next I saw no real evolution of art forms but cyclic changes of designs, with a preference for certain geometric patterns, at certain times of the year. Having watched various individuals of both sexes closely over a period of some years I can say that in the Onges at least, contrary to what is generally understood, the use of given patterns, and given kinds of ochre, does not correspond with given types of food. Any feast is always followed by painting, always with the weirdest designs possible, but always geometrical, never far from the current 'fashion', and never even remotely inspired by the basis of the feast.

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5 *Above* Mother feeding her baby from a Nautilus shell
6 *Right* The axe is one of the few primitive tools in use in the Andamans

[facing P. 66, D]

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

remains belonged to species still extant. Some chronological assistance was given, however, by four different stratifications due to evident changes in the level of the adjacent marshes, resulting not from any general marine phenomena, but from numerous land movements. On these occasions the cliffs sank, the sea flowed inland and corals flourished, later to be buried by the black ooze and mud of the mangrove swamps.

The maximum rise in the sea-level during the growth of the midden was a little over three metres, and affected a wide area. The date could be established by a full geological study of the archipelago as a whole, but it is clear that although this and similar occurrences had direct stratigraphic effects on the middens, the results were manifest only over very long periods of time.

Refuse from introductions of European origin, such as pipes, glass bottles, shot pellets, pieces of iron, etc., appear in the top level, only fifteen centimetres thick and dating back about a hundred years. There were no dog bones either here or anywhere else on Little or Great Andaman. Recently introduced, the dog clearly caused an increase in the amount of pig remains, and a parallel reduction in shell refuse. Below the fifteen centimetres level, iron, imported pipes and glass fragments disappear, and the crab-claw pipes, still used today by the Onges, begin to emerge. The smoking habit must, as I have said, date from very ancient times, as traces of these claw pipes appear in the lowest strata, in contact with virgin soil.[1]

The actual consistency of the layers, which vary considerably, can tell us much. At Golpahar, we reached a depth of about four metres from the top of the midden through refuse mixed with only a little loose earth, very easy to penetrate. Bones, shells and other objects emerged clean, as if only recently rejected. The situation altered suddenly about one metre from the bottom, when the strata became hard and cemented with a mixture of ashes and earth. In these layers the shells were calcified by exposure to fire, and so fragile that they could only be recovered in broken pieces.

[1] It is obvious that smoking is a very ancient vice; leaves of the wild hemp are still smoked in Africa as they were long before the discovery of tobacco and claw pipes like those of the Onges are found in Eastern New Guinea, especially on the south coast, and as far as the Torres Straits and the Melville Straits. In Australia these pipes appear only in a few coastal areas in the east and north, including the Gulf of Carpentaria, and they are not found in the rest of Australia or in Polynesia.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

they may be, and the strays of the Andaman forests howl unceasingly. Even in the Onge encampments the dogs howl enough to wake their sleeping masters; the only way to stop the noise is for the Onges to forestall it by taking their dogs into the family bed, fleas and all. There ensues silence, warmth and more fleas!

Hunting weapons of the Andamanese, the Semang and the Aetà were originally made by all three peoples in a similar way, common to all the Negritos. None have any defensive weapons as such; their bows and arrows, never feathered, serve as arms as well as for hunting and fishing. Shields are unknown and spears, rare in the Andamans and among the Semang, are apparently no longer in use among the Aetà; where they exist they are usually mainly for hunting. All three peoples, however, have the arrow harpoon.[1]

Their bows are all clearly derived from the same source. In the Andamans, only the Onges and Jarawas have remained true to the original form, local variations arising at a later date, and they afford additional evidence in favour of Little Andaman being the original springboard from which the Negritos entered Great Andaman.

All the Negritos make their bows from one piece of wood stripped longitudinally from the living trunks of large trees such as *Mimusops littoralis* or *Pterocarpus dalbergoides*. After they have been left to season the strips are patiently fashioned into the required shape; for this the Onges use the shells of *Cyrena* (the freshwater species, which are tougher). The bows are straight, thicker in the middle and gradually tapering towards the ends, and are usually 1·6 metres long, although there are exceptions. The cross section is the same throughout the length of the bow, varying from three or four centimetres diameter at the centre to two and a half centimetres at the horns. The inner surface is so slightly curved as to be almost flat, while the back is markedly convex. The blunt horns end in a 'shoulder and neck' stop to take the string, the neck projecting about one and a half centimetres beyond the shoulders – enough to hold the bowstring. The shoulder is formed by strips of *Ficus* bark wound round the bow, or the yellow fibres of *Dendrobium*; one shoulder is invariably larger than the other. The string itself, made from long thin strips of *Ficus* bark twisted together, has a very narrow loop on one end and a larger one at the other;

[1] See p. 86.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

the arrival of the Negritos in the Andamans from the south; yet more evidence is provided by the Onge arrows. In the Andamans there are two types of arrows, those used for fish, and those for game, the latter also being used against human targets.

The same arrows are found throughout the archipelago, confirming a common origin. Only the dimensions vary from one area to another and that only very slightly; the Onges have both the biggest fishing arrows, and the biggest arrow harpoons, and the Arioto the smallest. In the past the islanders used arrows with from two to four points for fish, but I was unable to find any traces of them; those picked up on North Sentinel some years ago were possibly the last to be made.

The fishing arrow of the Andamans is made basically from the small native bamboo. The Onges remove the knots by scraping them down gradually with *Cyrena* shells, and then cut off a length varying between seventy centimetres and about one metre. Into one end they fix securely a hardwood stick, fifteen to twenty centimetres long. This foreshaft takes the head, now nearly always iron, but in the past made of wood, fish spines or pig bone. In the kitchen-middens I also found heads made out of shaped pieces of *Tridacna*. The three parts of the arrow are then bound together with very thin waxed fibres, wound carefully round and round, great care being taken to prevent the bamboo shaft splitting where the foreshaft is forced in. The completed arrow finishes up 1–1·15 metres long overall. The head is barbed, to hold the fish once it is hit; to get it out the whole arrow has to be pulled through. Sometimes, but not always, the shaft has a notch in it, to take the cord, care being taken to make the notch never more than two centimetres from any knot, to avoid any possibility of the shaft splitting. Alternatively, splits are prevented by binding waxed thread tightly round the shaft.

The hunting arrow, or arrow harpoon, is an intelligent adaptation, the result of acute observation of wild life, and is more complicated than the fishing arrow which is intended only to pierce the victim. The hunting arrow must not only score a hit, it must also prevent the animal from escaping into the undergrowth and force it to reveal its position. The harpoon holds the victim cruelly and securely, and the excruciating pain caused by the drag of the cord forces the animal to reveal its position by its cries of agony. The

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

eyes to crack their skulls – and thrown into the small basket every woman carries on her back, hung from the usual cord round her forehead.

The fish the women catch are all the varicoloured species which always haunt the coral shallows, bright red, blue, green, black and white in a wonderful range of stripes and patterns. The Onges eat them with no respect for design, and I must confess that I myself found them very good.

Besides fish, the women catch molluscs, crustacea, lobsters, crayfish, crabs and even some species of hermit crabs (the latter are baked alive in their adopted shells, and only the abdomen is edible). Lobsters are plentiful, some striped with green and blue and weighing up to half a kilogram, with a very delicate flavour, but the Onges do not seem to be greatly interested in them. They prefer fish and crabs; *Pterocera*, again baked alive, are great favourites and I quite saw why the kitchen-middens are full of *Pterocera* shells.

The men prefer to fish with bows and arrows made specially for the purpose, and very different from those intended for game, the shaft being made of very light hollow cane, instead of the solid wood demanded by the mechanics of the game-arrow. The fishing arrow is made of three parts, bound tightly into one. The point, now made of iron,[1] is about four to five millimetres in diameter and twenty to twenty-five centimetres long. Like that of the arrow harpoon, it is fixed by a tightly bound thread to a small stick or foreshaft about fifteen to twenty centimetres long and slightly smaller in diameter than the shaft proper (usually eighty to eighty-five centimetres long), so that the overall length of the finished arrow is a hundred and ten centimetres or more. The binding threads are held fast by a mixture of resin and beeswax, coloured with ochre in the case of new arrows.

I tried giving the Onges hooks and lines; they were intrigued by my demonstration of how to leave lines overnight and draw them in next morning loaded with fish, but no more. This was not superstition or fear of the unknown but sheer adherence to established custom. They have neither incantations, amulets nor propitiating

[1] Formerly made of *Tridacna*, or very hard wood. Some of the latter are still to be found, but all the other types of head – fish quills, bone, and *Tridacna* – have disappeared long ago.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

type of canoe is the only craft seen. I saw some hauled up on the beach, identical with the ones I had seen the Onges building, even to the *Nautilus* shell as a baler. In face of this and other evidence there can be little doubt that the people of North Sentinel are descended from the Onges, possibly driven off course by some storm, and then isolated on the island.

The Arioto, copying Indian and Burmese craft, have in recent times come to modify the original canoe somewhat, deepening the gunwales and doing away with the float. The result is a craft which though it remains small is unlikely to fill with water in heavy seas. But even the Arioto prefer the single outrigger canoe for sea voyages.

The only real seafarers, however, are the Onges, who make regular hunting trips as far as Rutland. In the past they sometimes made devastating raids as far as Car, but these have died out over the past hundred years as their numbers have dwindled. There is certainly no doubt that at one time the Onges undertook considerable sea voyages in canoes the same as they build today.

The work involved in the building of these canoes is, as I have said, enormous. The preparatory work on the tree, and then the felling, are hard enough without proper equipment. I gave my Onge friends some long-handled wood-cutter's axes, to help in this part of the work. In their enthusiasm they chopped so hard they soon broke the handles and chipped some of the tempered blades, so that I had to take them to Port Blair for repair! But the real work begins with the working of the felled trunk. Then a small and very crude form of hatchet[1] has to be used, flaking off small strips like a plane; fire is never used to assist in the process. Fortunately the *Sterculia* wood usually chosen is soft.

The original shape is not touched after the required length, calculated so as to allow for the harpoon-thrower's platform at each end, has been cut. The irregularities of the trunk are left intact, so that the canoes look distorted and even ugly despite their seaworthiness. During the preliminary stage of stripping the bark great care is taken not to chip the outer ring of wood immediately below the bark; this is smooth and fine-grained, and more waterproof than the inner layers. One danger is that as the wood dries

[1] The blades used to be made from *Tridacna* shell, but in more recent times they have come to be made of iron from wrecked ships cast up on the beaches.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

One danger is that as the wood dries
396 out small cracks will open up and let water through the end of the
[314] canoe; these the Onges stop with resin.

Then comes the decision which side of the trunk is to be the keel. Once this has been decided, the upper surface is chipped flat and the hollowing out of the centre section begins, leaving the flat platform at each end. The finished shell is often no more than three centimetres in thickness, increasing slightly under the end platforms to protect the ends of the canoe as they grate on the reefs.

The float and booms, which project considerably, are for obvious reasons attached after the canoe has been rolled to the water. The
[824] booms are made of heavy hard wood, but the float itself, made of *Hibiscus tiliaeus* or *Sterculia villosa*, has to be not only light, so as to float, but soft, so that the fixing pegs can be driven in easily. These are set into the float in a series of triangles, held in securely by the expansion of the wet wood and the upward force of the sea. The free ends of the pegs are then lashed together in groups of three so that each triangular set becomes a pyramid. The outrigger booms are set parallel to each other; each runs right across the hull, firmly lashed into holes bored on each side of the canoe high in the gunwales, and extends at least three metres out on one side. The apex of each pyramid formed by the float pegs is lashed up to one of the booms, holding the float fast to the booms above it.

The canoes have no reinforcing ribs either inside or out, and because of their inherent fragility they are never left in the water; they are dragged up over specially cleared runways to the communal huts near the shore. There they are left lying in the sun among the Ipomeas.

[314] The direct heat dries them so rapidly that the wood invariably develops cracks, and the Onges resort patiently to their invariable remedy; resin is smeared over the cracks inside and out, and reinforced by a network of fibres laid on top, with a further layer of resin to seal them over.

[137] Once on shore the canoes are left lying till they are next wanted, but with everything ready; the invaluable *Nautilus* is ready to bale out, so too are the point, cord and shaft of the harpoon, the large flat stones on which fire is carried without damaging the craft, and the blocks of wood to knock the harpoons out of the turtle shells.

11: Cipriani E-1 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

I examined a number of canoes drawn up on the beach. They varied in size from some eight to ten metres long, built to carry twenty people, to small single-manned craft three to four metres long, and there were some very small ones clearly intended to encourage the children to set out on their own. The very large canoes are, however, rare. The beam also varied considerably from some barely wide enough to admit a man's knees to others of one and a half metres or more.[1]

In the shallows, contrary to some assertions, paddles are never used; the booms would make alternate paddling extremely difficult. Reversed harpoon shafts are instead used as punt poles and oars, usually made of *Myristica longifolia*, are used only in deep water. They are sometimes but not always lashed into the holes in the gunwale through which the booms pass. They are short, not more than 1·3 metres long and are always rowed forwards (obviously there would be a danger of stubbing a reef if the European style of rowing was used). Like the canoes, the oars vary somewhat in size. Very roughly made they consist of a handle ninety centimetres long and a forty-centimetre blade. The grip tapers almost to a point and increases gradually in diameter towards the blade, which is long, narrow, blunt-ended and flat-convex in section. Usually it is merely roughly shaped with the Onges' crude hatchet, but occasionally it is smoothed off with a sharp *Cypraea* shell. The helmsman and pilot stand on the two platforms, guiding the canoe with oars. As far as possible the rowers avoid the side bearing the outrigger mechanism; any deviation of course caused by the unilateral rowing is corrected by the two steersmen.

When they first launch a canoe the Onges decorate it with ochre designs like those on their bodies and the hollowed logs used to hold honey, although they are washed off as soon as the craft enters the water. As usual the men do all the work up to that point and the women do the painting. The initial painting is the only form of ornament on the canoes; there is not even a mark of ownership, although each canoe is curiously enough recognised as the property of one man, despite the fact that everyone has helped to

[1] I am unable to agree with Brown that the Onge canoes are extremely small, that they have bow and stern, and that their floats are inefficient. My own experiences of travelling in the canoes has led me to the opinion that on these and other points Brown was wrong, possibly partly because he never actually visited Little Andaman.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

136 Andaman, in Yeratil Jig (near Port Anson, about fifteen miles from Long Island) in Diglipur (or Dilyapur) Creek, near Port Cornwallis, and in Wilima Jig,[1] but they are now extinct. In March 1952 the Onges had described the presence of crocodiles so clearly to me as to leave no doubt what they meant, and I soon received confirmation when I found their tracks on the sand about one kilometre from the mouth of Jackson Creek, on the right bank, and then saw some lying on the shore across the creek. Through my field glasses I saw small birds pecking between the teeth of the great wide-open jaws. As we approached they slid lazily into the sea, some reappearing a little later, their cavernous mouths rising vertically out of the water. Every day after that I saw them swimming quietly near the banks, and one afternoon my men and I between us saw over a dozen, near Nachuge, dozing in the mud or in the water.

[825] [198] The Onges assured me that crocodiles will come out of the water to a certain whistle. I got them to try it; the Onges whistled, and whistled again, but no crocodiles came!

237 321 276 172 Very different from the great turtles and the crocodiles, but equally important in the daily life of the Onges, are the crabs from which the islanders make their ancient and very characteristic pipes. They eat the crabs and use the claws to make the pipes, cutting them across the joint and boring a hole in the end, as they have done since time immemorial, to smoke aromatic leaves from the forest. Fragments of similar pipes, charred with use, appear in even the lowest strata of the kitchen-middens, dating back thousands of years and proving the antiquity of the smoking habit. Contrary to popular belief, smoking did not begin everywhere with the introduction of tobacco – in Asia at least men smoked thousands of years ago.

237 276 171 The claw pipes of the Onges have a groove cut round the end which goes into the mouth, so that the teeth can grip it better. I have seen identical pipes, with the same groove, in the Melville Islands, where there are many other signs of ethnographic connections with the Andamans. The canoes, for example, are identical with those of the Andamans; the peoples themselves, however, are today very different physically.

[501] [142]

[165] [1] According to Portman a man was dragged into the water here on 11 May 1894 by a crocodile and killed; several similar incidents have occurred since.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

These crabs are enormous, weighing one and a half kilograms, and are very tasty. Like many land crabs they have one large claw and a smaller one, the difference being quite marked in the males, though hardly noticeable in females. Some appear left-handed, some right-handed; I confirmed this by looking at thousands of them with the help of my Indians, and sent some to the Institute of Zoology at the University of Genoa for further examination.

On the inside of the large claw, to hold the prey while the crab bites, are protuberances that look like teeth. They have a very similar function and are a good example of superficial similarity in different types of organs designed for a similar purpose.

The females, like those of other crabs, carry the mass of round, almost transparent, orange-coloured eggs under the abdomen, attached to her swimmerets and well protected. In the great crabs from which the Onges make their pipes the bluish-green shell is reflected on to the eggs, giving them a beautiful sheen. Immediately the young are hatched, they cling underneath the mother's abdomen like the eggs, so that if a female is caught one can be sure of having the whole brood. Even at this stage the sex and the disparity of the claws is discernible as the young are exact replicas of the adults. Two curious things about them are that the number of the two sexes in any brood are exactly equal, and that in the males there are equal numbers right- and left-handed. The point is an interesting one, and I hope geneticists will be able to investigate it further.

Another important feature in Onge life is the *Nautilus*, the cephalopod whose shells provide the only drinking vessels they know. *Nautilus* shells, unlike those of gastropods, are spiral in one plane, with interlocular septa. The mollusc occupies the last, or largest, of the whorls, which communicates with the rest of the spiral by a cylindrical syphuncle running through the mid-line of the shell. This is connected to the creature's viscera by a vascular tube, which for hydrostatic purposes regulates the amount of air and water in the chambers. Each chamber is concave on the side nearest the aperture, and the distance between the septa increases with the size of the whorls, to a fixed maximum, limited by their number, which is constant in adults. *Nautilus*, a living fossil from the time of the ammonites, is the last survivor of a genus dating from the Silurian period; long ago there were many species, although only four have

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

136 been found since 1500. It is found only in the seas round Australia and Malaysia, flourishing round the Andamans, growing rarer towards Indonesia, and reaching as far as the Philippines.

Although *Nautilus* shells are very often thrown up by the sea on the shores of Little Andaman (though rarely whole, because they are so fragile), I never managed to find one alive. The creature prefers to live below thirty metres, where it can be taken with a hook and line. I distributed some to the Onges and offered them every possible inducement, but no one managed to catch a live *Nautilus*. The lovely shells are striped white and rosy pink on top, shading to a mother of pearl colour underneath, and when polished and shaped make beautiful cups or ornaments. I brought some back to Italy with me, but the best were stolen. In one collection in the Zoological Museum of the University of Florence there are some fine ones set in silver, now of considerable value.

237 302 123 177 Another shell which the Onges use is that of the huge bivalve *Tridacna*, the elephant of the mollusc world (see p. 114). For many hundreds of years they have filled these shells with water and used them as mirrors when they paint themselves. (The reflection is poor, however, and they fell enthusiastically on the mirrors I had taken with me. These they named *quietanga*, derived from their name for *Tridacna*, and followed me all over the island to get them.)

136 262 Two species of *Tridacna* are found on Little Andaman; *Tridacna gigas*, the larger, and *Tridacna squamosa*, large, but somewhat lighter in weight. Both live in relatively shallow water and are equally terrifying once they have got a hold (see p. 114). Fortunately, the Onges have learnt to surprise them when they are open and slash the single immensely powerful muscle, which closes the two halves of the shell. The flesh is edible when well boiled, and certain parts can even be quite tasty, with a delicate sea flavour; I even ate some raw, much to the horror of the Onges. (They were equally scandalized at my eating raw some of the excellent oysters, which they despise.)

136 Some of the *Tridacna* of the Andamans and Nicobar can weigh over two and a half hundredweights. The actual flesh is not heavy – the two halves of a magnificent *T. squamosa* that I caught at Nancowry in the Nicobars and gave to the Governor of the Andamans weighed nearly one and a half hundredweights and were over 1·3